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TIMOR-LESTE

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NEWS RELEASE

USAID Addresses Needs of Timor-Leste's Displaced Population

DILI, TIMOR-LESTE -- Timor-Leste's capital, Dili, remains calm and quiet after civil disturbances on April 28, 2006, prompted tens of thousands of people to leave their homes in the city. No further disturbances have taken place in Dili, but many people have been reluctant to return because accurate information about the situation is not available to them. To address this problem and to help those living away from their homes, USAID has asked its partners to initiate special activities focused on disseminating information and responding to the needs of the internally displaced population.

In an effort to provide timely and accurate information to people across the country, USAID partners are working to with the public broadcast service, Radio-Television Timor-Leste (RTTL), to produce news updates for nationwide broadcast and distribution to community radio stations. Dili-based community radio station Radio Rakambia is also using its mobile broadcasting facilities to bring information and news to rural areas and Dili suburbs where there is currently no radio access. Reliable information is expected to dispel inaccurate rumors and encourage residents to return home.

USAID is also helping RTTL fast-track the repair schedule for its district transmitters and produce a special news story on the recent events for distribution through the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union and the European Broadcasting Union.

To assist the many thousands of residents who left their homes, USAID partners are coordinating with the government's Ministry of Labor and Community Reinsertion. Many families have gathered in school grounds and church facilities on the outskirts of Dili and are in need of basic supplies. Partners are involved in a wide range of activities including: supplying supplemental food to pregnant and lactating women and children under five; providing health screening services to identify cases of infectious diseases; distributing hygiene kits and insecticide-treated mosquito nets to reduce the incidence of vector-borne disease and improve sanitation; and supplying potable water.

USAID is also addressing the need to investigate the April 28 disturbances and their aftermath. With USAID funding, the Office of the Provedor (the independent ombudsman for corruption, human rights abuses, and maladministration) is sending four mobile monitoring teams to cover areas around the country subject to potential conflict and rumors of violence. USAID is also funding a short-term legal advisor to help with the Provedor's monitoring work and public reporting of activities and findings. This support complements USAID's assistance to the office during its first year of operation.

Most displaced residents are expected to return to their homes soon. In the meantime, USAID and other international donors are working closely with the Timor-Leste government to meet their immediate needs and to help life in the young nation return to normal as quickly as possible.

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